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**Testimony of Erin Livensparger, Regional Manager of Education & Training,
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
In Support of SB 1138 *AN ACT CONCERNING THE STRENGTHENING OF SCHOOL
BULLYING LAWS*
March 11, 2011**

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the issue of school bullying in SB 1138 *AN ACT CONCERNING THE STRENGTHENING OF SCHOOL BULLYING LAWS*. My name is Erina Livensparger from Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. We appreciate the concern of committee members for the safety and well being of young people and recognizing the need to strengthen school bullying laws. We support the need to strengthen the bullying laws yet this bill is lacking an essential component.

Research has continually demonstrated that enumeration, or the specific listing of characteristics which are frequently the subject of bullying and harassment, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability, is crucially important for implementation of anti-bullying law that effectively protects ALL students.¹ Research also shows that students who live in states or school districts with enumerated laws and policies are provided greater protections across the board.²

Anti-bullying legislation should protect all students while also recognizing that those most likely to suffer from bullying and harassment are most likely to have their bullying and harassment overlooked by school authorities. Enumeration is crucial to ensure that anti-bullying policies are effective for all students.

As an educator and trainer I understand the importance and need for strong bullying laws as more youth are falling victim to bullying each year. Many young people I work with have come to me with stories of themselves or a friend who has been bullied. To help protect young people from bullying it is essential that school staff and educators receive proper training. Training will enable them to identify and address name-calling, bullying and harassment effectively and in a timely manner.

At Planned Parenthood we offer professional trainings on topics such as bullying to help adults who are parents, teachers or youth serving professionals identify some of the technological tools available and address ways to discuss and deter risky sexual behavior; cyber bullying and harassment.

As educators we strive to understand how adolescents communicate, often in the virtual world of text messaging and social media, and help young people avoid falling victim to sexual harassment, bullying and cyber bullying.

We urge you to support SB 1138 and respectfully ask you to address enumeration as an essential component of improving and strengthening the school bullying laws. Thank you.

¹ GLSEN Enumeration: A tool for advocates <http://www.glsen.org/>

² Harris Interactive and GLSEN (2005). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN.